





PER BV 2580 .R44 v.96-127

Neglected Arabia





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2015



PROCESSION COMMEMORATING DEATH OF A RELIGIOUS HERO.  
—[See 'The Feast of Moharram'].  
OF THE SECTION  
JAN 6 1919  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

# NEGLECTED ARABIA

## CONTENTS

- |                               |                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| THE TRIAL BY ORDEAL IN ARABIA | Rev. Edwin E. Calverley   |
| A VISIT TO BASRAH             | Mrs. C. Stanley G. Mylrea |
| THE FEAST OF MOHARRAM         | Mrs. Paul W. Harrison     |
| ZENANA WORK                   | Miss Fanny Lutton         |
| ZEERAAN                       | Mrs. Dirk Dykstra         |
| MISSIONARY PERSONALIA         |                           |



# The Arabian Mission

## TRUSTEES

Rev. Henry E. Cobb, D.D., *President*,  
Rev. J. P. Searle, D.D., *Vice-Pres.*, Rev. J. H. Whitehead,  
Rev. Lewis Francis, D.D., Mr. John Bingham,  
Rev. T. H. Mackenzie, D.D., Mr. E. E. Olcott.

## HONORARY TRUSTEES

W. A. Buchanan, Esq., London, England.  
Rev. James Cantine, D.D., Basrah, Mes.  
Rev. S. M. Zwemer, D.D., LL. D., Holland, Mich.

## OFFICERS

Rev. W. I. Chamberlain, Ph.D., *Foreign Sec.*, 25 East 22d Street, N. Y.  
F. M. Potter, *Associate Secretary*, 25 East 22d Street, N. Y.  
Rev. W. J. Van Kersen, *District Sec.*, Holland, Mich.  
Mr. Howell S. Bennet, *Treasurer*, 25 East 22d Street, N. Y.

## MISSIONARIES

Rev. and Mrs. James Cantine,	Basrah, Mesopotamia.	Evangelistic Work.
Rev. and Mrs. S. M. Zwemer,	Holland, Mich.	Literary Work.
Rev. and Mrs. Fred J. Barny,	Madanapalle, S. India.	Temporary Appointment.
Rev. Jas. E. Moerdyk,	Basrah, Mesopotamia.	Educational Work.
Rev. and Mrs. J. Van Ess,	Chicago, Ill.	On Furlough.
Miss J. A. Scardefield,	Bahrein, P. G.	Evang. & Medical Work.
Miss Fanny Lutton,	Maskat, Arabia.	Evangelistic Work.
Rev. and Mrs. D. Dykstra,	Bahrein, P. G.	Educational Work.
Dr. and Mrs. C. S. G. Mylrea,	Kuweit, P. G.	Medical Work.
Rev. Gerrit J. Pennings,	Bahrein, P. G.	Evangelistic Work.
Rev. and Mrs. E. E. Calverley,	Kuweit, P. G.	Evang. & Medical Work.
Dr. and Mrs. P. W. Harrison,	Bahrein, P. G.	Medical Work.
Rev. & Mrs. G. D. Van Peurse,	Maskat, Arabia.	Evan. & Medical Work.
Miss Sarah L. Hosmon, M.D.	Chicago, Ill.	On Furlough.
Miss Gertrud Schafheitlin,	Canning, Nova Scotia.	Women's Evan. Work.
Miss Charlotte B. Kellien,	Basrah, Mesopotamia.	Educational Work.
Rev. and Mrs. H. A. Bilkert,	Bahrein, P. G.	Language Study.
Miss M. C. Van Pelt,	Bahrein, P. G.	Language Study.

Address all letters to Missionaries in the field, Via Bombay.

The Arabian Mission depends for its support and the extension of its work, not on the treasury of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America, though under its care and administration, but upon contributions specifically made for this purpose. The churches, societies and individuals subscribing are not confined to the Reformed Church. Members of other denominations are among its supporters and its missionaries. Regular gifts and special donations are invited from all who are interested in Mission work in Arabia. Regular contributors will receive quarterly letters and annual reports, without application. All contributions, or applications for literature or information, should be sent to "THE ARABIAN MISSION," 25 East 22d Street, New York.



# Neglected Arabia

Missionary News and Letters

Published Quarterly

for private circulation among the friends of  
THE ARABIAN MISSION

## The Trial by Ordeal in Arabia

REV. EDWIN E. CALVERLEY

Some years ago two silver forks were stolen from our home. The table-boy, a Shiah, who felt that he was naturally suspect, offered very willingly to have me take him before the "sayyid," who would try him with grains of wheat. The sayyid would recite curses over the grains. Then the boy would have to swallow them. If the grains stuck in his throat, his guilt would be evident. But if he could swallow them, his innocence would be proved.

A few months ago our colleagues here had a rain coat stolen from their home while we were all away attending our preaching service for Moslems. A fruitless search was made in the room of the servants who had access to the house. Then a Najdi hospital assistant, of the Sunni sect, suggested that all possible suspects be taken before the "sayyid" to "lick the fire."

"But I do not think it will be necessary to have the trial," he added, "because I believe that as soon as the thief knows he will have to stand the test he will confess."

Various methods are in common use in Arabia for securing admission of guilt. The first is that of the oath. This may be taken on the Qur'an, or simply with the raising of the right hand, and is administered regularly by the *Qādhi*. The second is "eating the cane," the bastinado, until confession is volunteered. A modification of this "third degree" method is used when suspected thieves are "crucified." This crucifixion does not mean killing. Just this month a servant suspected of stealing Rupees 700 was crucified in the great public open space in Kuwait where visiting caravans park their camels. A pole



A BLIND ARAB SHEIKH AND HIS SCRIBE

was stuck upright in the ground and the poor fellow was placed with his back to it, and with his hands tied to it behind him.

Still another method of ascertaining guilt is that already referred to, the trial by ordeal. The article on the subject in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., indicates that Burchardt (*Arabien*, pp. 98, 233, are the references given) was acquainted with the custom, but I do not have his book and do not know how fully he described how it is practiced.

My own investigations in the subject have been facilitated because I was fortunate enough to have the son of such a practitioner in our school. This *sayyid* is not the only operator in Kuwait, although, in the nature of the case, the power such a custom assumes could not be ascribed to many different men. There is another practitioner living at Buwairda, on the Arabs' River opposite Abadan. He seems to be resorted to in Basrah cases, and he sometimes comes to Kuwait. Cases are also sometimes brought from Basrah to Kuwait for trial.

The Basrah *sayyid's* method is to use the *tawva*. This is an iron plate, round and very thin, fifteen inches or more in diameter. On it the Arabs are accustomed to bake their delicious very thin bread. This *tawva* is heated red (not white) hot. Each suspected person picks it up. Guilt is indicated when it sticks to anyone's fingers.

Among the Shi'ah *sayyids* of Kuwait there are several practitioners. One of them uses the leavened dough test. All the suspects take a portion of the dough in their fingers and work it. Those whose dough works well are indicated to be innocent. The one whose dough crumbles as he works it with his fingers is declared to be guilty.

Our Sunni friend has quite a large repertoire of tests. A word or two about him may be of interest. He is a man short in stature, slight in build, heavily wrinkled in forehead, sunken in cheeks, black bearded, with small and deep-set eyes, constantly shifting. As stated, he is a *sayyid*, or descendant of Mohammed. He is learned in Islamic lore, but I fear not those pure disciplines which elevate the mind, but rather those dark subjects which debase the soul. He studied ten years in Baghdad, three more in Basrah, still further in a *mandal* (he called it), or necromancy circle, above Kerkuk. Then, with a company of others, he was sent to Cairo, where he stayed seven months for examinations. He secured the *murraqqa'at*, or patched robe (it cost him six pounds Turkish), and other apparel of the darwish who has passed his novitiate and become a qualified mystic. Until now he has denied to me that he is a Sūfi. He belongs to the Abdul Qādir al-Jilani order and says that he has had the usual darwish exercises in his house except during the last two years.

He has not gained a position of respect here, and he would not be allowed to preach in the mosques of the town, but matters are sometimes brought before him for his opinion of the law in the case. His opinion of the learning of the learned here is not high. He does not associate much with people here because, he says, their society is valueless. I have heard from others that it is because he does not want to have his occult powers put to the test. He is sometimes asked to vie with others in finding articles that are hidden on purpose, and it is said that he succeeds.



On one occasion he gave me as excellent a discourse on the essentials of true worship as any I have ever heard. It was what any Sūfi would say. One could wish that the man's life gave evidence that he even tried to live up to the lofty ideals he expressed. His reputation speaks of concubines to the extent of his buying power. That is of course not beyond the sanctions of his faith. He himself has told me that he followed a common custom here and had bought and set aside such a slave for the use of his son until the boy became ready for a proper marriage. The father said to me, however, that the lad had no use for the arrangement, which was what the son had himself previously told me.

I had long been looking for an opportunity to attend one of the trials by ordeal that the *sayyid* conducts. Such trials are not infrequent, since he not only adjudicates private cases, but also has cases sent to him by the ruler of the town. It was last November that the opportunity was given me.

The *sayyid* holds his trials in his reception room. This is a low, small, uncleaned, rough-plastered room, with the wall recesses filled with unarranged piles of torn and discolored books, as well as bottles and lamps. Bits of fur and skins hang from nails and rafters. Gazelle parchments are much recommended for magic spells. There is a large clock on the wall and two cheap, well-worn rugs stretched with a space between them on the floor. Light comes from the door and one window which faces the court yard.

When I arrived the *sayyid* was sitting beside his *suraīdān*, a carved wooden box with a bowl let in the top to hold charcoal. A detachable bellows furnishes the draft. Sitting further along the wall were three young Arabs obviously from Central Arabia. Opposite them sat another Arab, who I learned was the accuser.

After cursory greetings I sat opposite the *sayyid*. My presence was not a disturbing factor. I might say I was not noticed. Certainly I was not considered. There was a matter of serious concern engrossing the attention of the Najdies. It was explained to me quietly that the complainant had been robbed of forty-seven rupees, over fifteen dollars. His brother was among the suspects.

As I looked at them I came to the conviction that it was the brother who was guilty. I had been told that the *sayyid* was already sure who had stolen the money. But it need not be noted that if either he or I had pointed out the thief, the money would have been restored. The conviction had to be assigned to some power other than human reasoning or intuition in order to secure a voluntary acquiescence.

In the fire of charcoals was a long iron rod, at the end of which was a circular flattened disc, as large as a dollar. It ordinarily is used for stirring coffee beans as they are being roasted. This disc was being heated. Several times the *sayyid* took it out to see if it were hot all through. Meanwhile he discoursed disjointedly on the evils of stealing, its ingratitude, its uselessness. His every action was watched with solemn interest. I noticed that the *sayyid* did not recite any incantations over the rod or the fire, but merely talked to the young men.

Finally the disc seemed to be hot enough to suit him. He called for the nearest Najdi to come and squat before him, face to face. He spoke briefly to him and then had him stick his tongue far out. He then took the rod out of the coals and struck his own bare heel once or twice with the red hot disc. Then with the other side of the disc he struck the outstretched tongue of the first suspect, once, twice and a third time, in steady, but not rapid succession. The young man then resumed his former place without a word. The iron was put back into the coals and heated again. The *sayyid* dealt with the second in the same way.

With the third, the brother, he talked a much longer time, repeating his remarks on stealing in general and assuring him of the power of the fire to prove guilt. The young man declared in whispered tones that he did not steal the money.



A PERSIAN TEA SHOP IN KUWEIT

“But what would you do if the fire put the guilt on you?”

“I would pay. But I did not do it,” he added.

“I did not say that you did,” said the *sayyid*. “But the fire knows. If you are taken, it will be the fire that takes you.”

Then the *sayyid* slapped the disc on his tongue three times. The fellow stood the “lick” (*luhsa* is the name of this ordeal) quite as well as the others. Then a glass of water was called for and each of the suspects was given a drink from it. Then they were told to look for the “sign” on each other’s tongues. This they did, each pairing with the other. Then a small mirror was given them, and each had a look at his own tongue. All were as solemn as hospital patients.

“Have you seen it?” asked the *sayyid*. None would say.

“Well,” said the *sayyid*, turning to the brother, “the *nishan*, sign, is on you.”

Without a word they all got up and left.

The *sayyid*, I was told, would receive a fifth of the amount involved.

On another occasion I asked the *sayyid* why he had recited no incantations.

"Oh," said he, "that iron has been recited over hundreds of times. I have done it so often that it does not need to be recited over on particular occasions now."

He lent me a badly tattered hand-written book, containing, he said, the proper charm. The book has no cover or title page, but is one of that class of magic literature of which the *Shams al-Ma'arif*, the Sun of (Divining) Knowledges, is a shining example. I have seen three different printings of the latter work here in Kuwait. The charm the *sayyid* indicated I have translated as follows:

"*Azīmat al-Hadīd*: The Spell for Iron."

"It should be heated in the fire until it becomes red. Then recite over it the *Fātiha* (the first chapter of the Qur'an) seven times. Then recite this spell: In the Name of Allah, the Merciful and Compassionate. O Fire! O Storehouse! O Hiding-place! I have charmed thee by the quenching spells of Zamzam (the famous Meccan well) and of the solid-built Ka'ba! O Iron heated! Hasten burning and blessing! O Fire! We have brought them near to outwit the raging causer of grief! Destroy him! Wither his lips! Recover his forgetfulness! Allah has made room for thee! To the peaceable, give peace. Allah's innocent, do not wrong! Be for me and the peaceable as the fire was for Ibrahim, the Friend of the Compassionate, 'cold and safe . . . and they planned a trick against him, and we caused them to be the losers' (Qur'an, xxi, 69, 70). I have subdued thee by a thousand thousand (repetitions of) 'There is no strength and no power except in Allah, the High and Great.' I have subdued thee by a thousand of the Verse of the Throne, and a thousand of the Eternal (name of Allah) and a thousand of what decreases strength, and by a thousand of what is believed and a thousand (repetitions of) 'She has nought but Allah, the One, the Only,' and by a thousand of the Wise Qur'an, and by a thousand Blesseds and a thousand of 'All the Angels of Allah,' and a thousand of 'There is no strength and no power but in Allah.'"

Another test, used also by the Shiah *sayyids* here, is the *bal'* (swallowing) of bread. Its formula is given in the same manuscript as follows:

"For those suspected write on some wheaten bread. Break each loaf in pieces. The suspected ones eat it. The thief will be unable to swallow it. These are the names to be written on the bread.

HH, HH, HH, 'HH, 'HH, 'HH, 52 over bh, and 52 over bh.  
(52 is the numerical value of the letters bh.)

Stealer of the property of such a one, son of such a one.

This is valid, tried."

Other methods of trial by ordeal used by the *sayyid* consist in writing several names of Allah on the head of a large iron nail (which

is conspicuous in his office), and hammering the nail into the ground in the presence of the interested parties, accompanying each blow with an incantation. Then all are told to rise. The guilty one remains as if fastened by the nail to his place. The molten lead method is the one usually employed when women are concerned, as their faces may not be seen. The lead stiffens only around the guilty person's fingers. He also mentioned one impolite and one distressing condition that he was able to cause.

In forming a judgment about these practices, there is reason to avoid ridicule based on any pride of racial superiority. I had called to my attention Goodes' delectable illustration of the Trial by Ordeal in Bill Nye's "History of England," and it would cure anyone of any such tendency. Further, the *judicium Dei* cannot be ruled out of court altogether as having been a possible and real event, for authority for such trial in a particular case was given in the Bible (Num. 5:12-31). That is the one case where evidence is admittedly most difficult to secure, and, in a theocratic government, here, if ever, God would intervene to condemn or acquit his people. The Jewish rabbis believed the sanction for such trial persisted until it was abrogated by Hosea (4:14), (Hast. Bib. Dict., art. Marriage).

Nothing that I saw in our friend's practice or have learned of the whole custom gives evidence that it is God who is expected to declare judgment. There is an ascription of supernatural powers to the fire, the lead, the incantations, and the like. That is superstition. Even those strictest Moslems who claim that Muhammad authorized only the use of the name of Allah in *du'as*, prayers, yet degrade these prayers into incantations by their dependence upon the power of the words used. Moreover, those *sayyids* and mullas who, unlike our friend, are respected and allowed to preach in the mosques, write charms for the sick in body and mind, invoking and expecting only God's operation, still believe that God will act because of the words imbibed or worn.

Some of these last, perhaps, may not be accused of fraud, for they are at least sincere, giving evidence of their sincerity by accepting no money for their amulets. Yet, it is not certain that our friend is a conscious imposter. His mystic studies may have induced him to believe in such occult powers. He claims to be able to see the secret and the absent by means of ink spots and magic squares. But his appreciation of God's character and requirements and his own personal life, together with the uses he makes of his studies, do not tend to inspire approving confidence.

The *sayyid's* success in the case I saw needs no explanation. His reputation may easily rest on nothing more than his own powers of inference and insight and the application of known psychological laws.

This superstitious custom, though it has been practiced in these regions from Hammurabi's day until the present, will disappear from general usage through the general education of the people, as has happened in European countries. The credulity it indicates obviously needs to be replaced by an obedient faith in the immanent God whose presence ennobles, enlightens and abundantly enlivens His people.



## A Visit to Basrah

MRS. C. STANLEY G. MYLREA

It was like a pleasant dream, only when I woke up it was all true. An invitation came asking us to come to Basrah for a little visit, and as we had the hot summer to look forward to, we thought we would run away for a fortnight. We started off from Kuwait at dawn in a small government steamer and arrived at Fao about 5 p. m. As we were to spend the night there we thought we should like to go ashore for a little walk. There are only two or three buildings there, a Post Office and Telegraph Station, but it guards the entrance to the river and a powerful searchlight plays from sunset till dawn. It was the first place taken by the British on their way up to Basrah in 1914.

The next morning at daylight we were off again. The date gardens on either side of the river looked so pretty and green and were such



INDIAN SOLDIERS IN BASRAH

a wonderful change after our Kuwait desert. We passed a number of launches and monitors, besides several large ocean-going ships, but it was not until we neared Basrah that we got a glimpse of what Basrah really had become. The river was full of ships of every description and all seemed very busy. Two large camouflaged ships had evidently braved the Mediterranean and their weird markings had perhaps saved them from submarines. We passed several quays belonging to different military departments and went alongside Bhoussa Pier. Although it was 1 p. m. and hot there were plenty of khaki uniforms to be seen. No time to be sleeping as in the old Turkish days. Presently we and our luggage were put into a friend's launch and away we went up the creek to the Mission House. On our left a building attracted our interest. We were told it was the new garrison church,



and on the following Sunday we had the privilege of worshipping there morning and evening. Both services were well attended and the Bishop of Lahore preached on each occasion.

We had time for a little rest and then were off to a Y. M. C. A. picnic. From then on the days were quite full. Our friends were most kind in showing us all the wonderful things to be seen. One day they took us in a car to see the different base camps. Beautiful concrete roads have been built and we sped along through the date gardens and then out into the big open spaces full of tents. After seeing the camps at Magill and Makina we stopped at the Makina Club for tea and to listen to the band. One could hardly believe that one was in Basrah.

We spent one morning going over the Post Office and it was most interesting to see the arrangement for each department—Artillery, Engineers, Cavalry, Infantry, etc., and last of all the letters of those who had been moved off to other places and those on leave. Surely there is as little delay as possible in the letters reaching their destination. Then we visited the Censor's Office, a place one has often pictured to one's self and wondered if all the letters really were opened and read or if sometimes they did not let them go through. Each language has its special censor and we were told that the only one they could not read was Welsh, so all the letters written in Welsh, and they are many, have to go to London to be censored. The railroad runs right up to the Post Office and the mails are put into the vans and started off to Baghdad and other places up the river.

Very often about sunset we used to take a walk and usually passed by the Labor Corps Camp. Their tents are in a date garden and the cleanliness and order are wonderful. During the day each tent was rolled up for several feet above the ground and the whole garden was kept swept and spotless. After sunset as we returned from our walk, the men had come from their day's work, and were sitting in groups talking or lying on their blankets resting. One wonders how long it would take these low-class Arabs and Persians to get back to their filthy way of living if they were left to themselves or would they really prefer the clean way. I doubt it.

We spent two evenings at the cinema. I believe there was a moving picture palace in Basrah during the last days of the Turks so that the three cinemas that are there now cannot claim to be the first. The hall is quite large and is almost always well filled. The front rows are filled with Arabs and Indians and behind them the Tommies sit. Then come the boxes and seats where the officers and Red Cross nurses sit. Down in the pit you can have ice cream and lemonade brought to you. The two nights we were there the films were all from America, some of California and some of cowboy life. The Arabs and Indians seemed to enjoy them immensely and laughed heartily at all the funny parts.

One afternoon a friend lent us a car and we thought we would go to see the Shaibeh battlefield. There is not much to see, I believe, just the graves of those who fell there. When we were some fourteen miles out of Basrah, right in the desert, our car broke down. Our chauffeur took things to pieces, screwed and unscrewed everything

he could, but the car wouldn't move. The sun went down and the prospects of getting home became fainter and fainter, when we noticed some tents a little way off. As our road had run parallel to the telegraph wires, one of our number went off to these tents to see if they had any connection with the telegraph. In the meantime two carriages came from Basrah. We stopped them and asked them if they were going back to Basrah that night. In each carriage there was a long narrow box without a lid, one end resting on the driver's seat and the other on the hood behind the back seat. At first they said they were not going back and when we pressed them they said: "No. The funeral won't go back to-night, and besides we have no lights. If you have a lantern with you we might come back for you." All at



A DARWISH AND RIVER ARAB WOMAN IN THE BASRAH HOSPITAL COMPOUND

once we realized that the long boxes were coffins containing corpses which were being taken to Zobair for burial and as there was plague in Basrah we hastened to assure them that we would not need their assistance.

Presently the one of our number who had gone to the camp came back saying that he had been able to wire to Basrah explaining the situation. He had also made the interesting discovery that the group of tents was nothing less than Zobair Railway Station, although it was three and a half miles away from Zobair. A train from Nasiryeh for Makina was due at 8:30. It was then about 7:15 and we sat in our comfortable car waiting for the time to pass. We offered to have a sentry from the station come to guard the car so that the chauffeur could go home but he said his orders were that he must never leave

his car and he could get on without food if we would just send him a drink of water from the station. We were at the station on time and as the train pulled up we were told where to find the first-class carriage. No tickets had to be bought. Our little train puffed its way into Makina and as it drew up at the Station which, like Zobair, was only a group of tents, the Station Master met us saying that a car would soon arrive from Basrah to take us home. It soon came and as we rode home the driver asked us about the breakdown and said he was sorry he could not have taken us but that he had been engaged that afternoon. He intimated that if he had been with us there would have been no breakdown. We sat down to our dinner at 9:30, glad to be safely back but pleased with all our experiences.

Our visit came to an end all too soon. There were more things to see, but we enjoyed every minute of it, and got a little idea of what it means to occupy a country. If British occupation means such a rapid advancement of all that we include under the term "Christian Civilization," one can only hope that the good work will go on.





## The Feast of Moharram

MRS. PAUL W. HARRISON

As I looked from my window one day late in October I saw a number of flags floating from the tops of some of the houses of a Persian village close by. This was a new sight, and I wondered what it could mean. Each house seemed to have two flags, one of black, and one of red, white and green, and on the latter there was an ensign. On inquiring, I found that this decoration was in honor of the feast of Moharram which the Shiah sect of Mohammedans celebrate in commemoration of the death of Hussein, one of their religious heroes, a grandson of Mohammed.

Hussein was killed at Kerbela on the tenth of Moharram (the first month in the Mohammedan year). His tragic death is mourned in various ways, wherever the Shiah sect of Mohammedanism is found. In Bahrein last year quite elaborate celebrations took place. Every strictly orthodox Shiah wore black clothes for the entire month of Moharram, and decorated his house with a black flag, the sign of mourning. Since the greater number of Shiahs in this town are Persians, the Persian flag, red, white and green, was in great evidence also.

The Shiah mosque was draped in black. In the homes of the people, throughout the town, an unusual number of readings was held, the theme of which was the sufferings and death of Hussein. At these readings the women beat their breasts and wail and weep real tears over the death of their beloved Hussein.

On the ninth day of the month a bier draped with gaily colored cloth was carried through the streets on the shoulders of four men, followed by a number of men and women beating their breasts and crying; this in honor of the nephew of Hussein who was murdered on that day.

The culmination of these religious demonstrations was reached in the "Eed el Ashoor," the feast of the tenth day. On the morning of this day a big parade was held, in which the religious zealots, who are anxious to obtain a good reward in the next world, took part. A very elaborately planned procession it was. First came the standard-bearers carrying black flags, an emblem of mourning, and the Persian flags. Following these were two companies of about twenty men each, brandishing swords in the air and occasionally gashing themselves on the forehead and chanting in a mournful tone, "O Hussein! O Hussein!" These men wear new white garments to display the blood from their streaming wounds to the best advantage.

The body of the procession was made up of men and boys representing different relatives of Hussein who were taken prisoners, some of whom were killed. Two camels, one of them bearing the son and daughter of Hussein and the other bearing his sister, headed this division. Following these were two horsemen, Hussein's assassins, accompanied by ten or fifteen men on foot, all of whom were wildly brandishing staves and swords which they carried and pressing closely

upon a third horse, endeavoring to kill its rider, who was Hussein's brother. After these there came a fourth horse on which rode Hussein's son, dying from a wound caused by a sword which was still sticking through his skull. This headpiece was so ingeniously arranged that it gave the exact appearance of a sword thrust through the head. There followed four men carrying on their shoulders a bier supposed to contain the body of Hussein's son-in-law. Then came a smaller bier on which was Hussein's son, and following these was the bier of a nephew. The first two were draped with gaily colored cloths and little mirrors, but the latter was draped in black. Most important of all was the bier of Hussein himself. This was draped in white and on it sat a pure white dove. To make the beheading of the beloved hero more realistic a man lay on the bier with his head out of sight. In the place where the head should have been there protruded the



AN ARAB SWORD DANCE

neck of a freshly slaughtered animal which at the beginning of the performance spurted blood in a most gruesome manner.

The end of the procession was composed of two companies of about twenty-five men each, naked from the waist up, beating their breasts with their hands as hard as they could and crying continually, "O Hussein! O Hussein!"

When the parade was over the participants were feasted in a royal manner, the feast being provided by money left for that purpose by some who have crossed over to the other world. And thus ended the celebration commemorating the death of Hussein, a hero of a religion that permits all sorts of superstitions, and that drags its followers down to a plane of living, both moral and physical, that is almost unthinkable.

All you who read this, will you not join with us in prayer that Christ's Kingdom may come to these people who need Him so sorely?



## Zenana Work

MISS FANNY LUTTON

Zenana work does not mean work in the houses only. It means work by the roadside with women as they traverse the streets on errands, with groups outside their houses, with others congregated by the wells, in fields, and engaged in various occupations. It is not monotonous. Six houses may be visited in a morning and not one scene would be alike.

When I first came to Maskat my heart sank with dismay and fear. I had lived so long in Bahrein where the place and people were so familiar; but here in Maskat everything was so strange. I looked at the barren, rocky hills which surround the place, and I felt much like a child with a toothpick trying to hew the rocks. But after a residence of over six years here I no longer dread the barren rocks. I have gone over the rocky passes to the villages on the other side and now am known and welcomed by the people, and the children no longer run away from me, but call out, "Noorah has come," "Why have you stayed away so long? I have longed for you, asked about you," and so forth. I came from my furlough with a glad heart, glad to work among these people again, and received a hearty welcome from them on my return to their midst.

It would be ingratitude on my part if I did not mention why the work was not so hard as I thought it would be. It was because of the missionaries who had paved the way and prepared the people for us who followed. In many cases the reason people first welcomed me was that others had toiled before me, and the people were tolerant and no longer regarded me as a stranger, because they had made friends with those who toiled before I came. The missionaries to-day are having better times in Bahrein because of the hard, loving toil of Mrs. Zwemer and the late Mrs. Thoms; and I to-day would like to pass a vote of thanks to Mrs. Cantine who made it easier for me to work in Maskat. Her name is still remembered here and loved, and far away in Oman where she went on tours with Dr. Cantine the people still record the wonderful sight of seeing a white woman visiting them and staying a while with them.

I felt it my duty to study the people and their customs just as diligently and zealously as the Arabic language. One can often give so much offence and act impolitely according to their code of etiquette, and where there is no principle of the Gospel violated nor disloyalty to our Lord we ought to respect their customs. I have heard their remarks to one another about my deportment with them when they thought I did not understand and it has taught me much. I remember reading once that "politeness is like an air cushion; there is nothing in it but it wonderfully eases the joints." I do not think I should have been invited to eat so often with Maskat royalty if I had not been particular to notice and respect their social etiquette.

These people are so friendly and hospitable, and in paying them a purely social call one is impressed with their geniality and readiness

to welcome and entertain. But directly one touches the vitally important things, their hostility is in evidence. In their religion they are bigoted, narrow, and self-righteous. They do not know the meaning of conscience. They are entirely vague on conviction of sin. "I am a Moslem" covers every deficiency. They are the true believers, and God looks with special favor on them. If their prophet did anything good or evil it was by special command of God. Mohammed is over all and above all. Workers who work exclusively among Jews can understand in a measure what it is to work among Moslems. It is not easy to work faithfully and lovingly in Moslem lands, but we have the comforting thought that we are working for the Master. He has called us to the work, and by His grace and ever-abiding presence we can continue and in due time the harvest must be reaped. The day may not be far distant when the people shall come in clans as did the Koreans.

We are thankful to see the people coming to the service on Sundays and the hospital on week days. We are not allowed to have a church bell so I act as one. Before service I go and invite the people. I always meet with a good-natured response although they may fail to keep their promise to come. On my daily rounds I am often called into houses that otherwise I might have passed by. Visiting the houses of mourning has brought me into contact with numbers of women who have come from various villages and they remember me so that when I go to the distant villages I receive a welcome and they no longer fear me. Often when I cannot record an actual Bible-reading I can quote Scripture from memory and they get a Gospel message in this way. So few of them read that it is difficult to distribute Gospel portions. It would mean giving them to the young children and they only tear them up when tired of playing with them.

I am thankful for the kind praying friends who bear us up in the work. Their prayers, sympathy, and generosity cheer and sustain us, and often when we feel so unworthy to be in the work, we plead for the prayers of the good people to be answered on our behalf and on behalf of the people where we live and work at the command of the risen Son of God whose resurrection command was, "Go ye. I am with you always even to the end."



## Zeeraan

MRS. DIRK DYKSTRA

The word "zeeraan" comes from an Arabic root which means to visit. It is the plural of the word "zaar" meaning visitor. "Jinns" and zeeraan both play a large part in the lives of the people but there is one great difference between them and that is, that jinns are of the earth and are connected with the underworld and are objects of fear, but zeeraan are from heaven. In connection with both is used the expression "taht edh-dhoureh," meaning, "under compulsion." Any wish or order from a zaar or jinn is binding, and a person is "under compulsion" when he has received such an order or wish. Those who are "under compulsion" because of jinn are objects of commiseration, and are considered great sufferers; but because of this purgatorial suffering in this world they are sure of an immediate entrance into heaven. Zeeraan are not feared and are not considered a torment. Zeeraan come to both men and women; those that come to men are feminine and those that come to women are masculine. When the zeeraan come to a man and he is giving a feast for them he must wear at least one article of a woman's dress. When the women have their zeeraan visiting them they occasionally wear an article of man's dress but that is not the rule. It is said that one of the prominent men of the place is compelled by his zeeraan to put on, every Friday, all of a woman's dress, including her jewelry and hair decorations, especially the spicy green herb called "mashmoum," which is very definitely and necessarily part of a woman's toilet. When these visitors come there is one chief party who is called the zaar and he with his followers constitute the zeeraan. This chief has a name; those visiting the women are called Sheikh Abd el-Lateef, Sheikh Abd el-Kareem, Sheikh Abd el-Azeez, Bakheet, Shmaiter, and those visiting the women have feminine names such as, Sheikh eh, Lateefeh, Bakheeteh. The outward sign of being possessed by a zaar is the wearing of a signet ring, with the name of the zaar and of the person himself engraven on a red stone, and also the "shehadeh" or witness, "La illaha illa allah, wa Mohammed rasoul allah," there is no God but God and Mohammed is the prophet of God. Sometimes there are people who have the zeeraan but who are ashamed to be known as such, especially among the ruling class and the "four hundred." These wear a ring with the simple engraving, "En-nasru min allah wa fethun kareeb," the victory is from God and deliverance is near. This signet ring must receive a bath of blood before it becomes efficacious, and so a fowl must be killed and the stone soaked in the blood.

There are various groups of people who have zeeraan and each of these groups has its own head who exercises authority and who advises others. Such a one is called "abu ez-zeeraan, or "um ez-zeeraan," meaning, "the father or mother of the zeeraan." This denotes that such a one excels in the number of zeeraan that possess him and who is in close touch with the zeeraan. Sometimes they are also called "sheikh or sheikheh ez-zeeraan," but locally the term "abu" or "um"

is more common. Amongst the zeeraanists it is considered a great honor to be such an "abu" or, "um" and a great deal of deference is paid to them, and besides this it pays well financially. The word of an "abu" or "um" is final. The following illustration shows what trickery there is about it all and how willingly the people are duped. A certain woman died and her sister-in-law wished to have an article of dress of the deceased. But the sister-in-law's mother was doubtful whether it would be well for her daughter to wear the deceased woman's clothing and so decided to ask the "um ez-zeeraan" about it. Her answer to the mother was, that it would be unwise for the daughter to wear that piece of clothing, but that she, the "um," would take it and wear it for her, vicariously so to speak, and the mother uncom-



TYPICAL BEDOUIN

plainly parted with the article. The Arabs and the negroes pay a great deal of attention to these zeeraan. The Baharanes believe in zeeraan but they are much more quiet about it, and if they have many gatherings for them it is kept quiet. There is one woman of this class, who are Shiahs, who is an "um," but investigations show only this one, while the Arabs and negroes have many.

It is very difficult to find out just how or when the presence of zeeraan is ascertained. In cases of sickness it seems that when there is some baffling illness, or some puzzling symptoms appear, the conclusion is that zeeraan have entered the sick person. Much more is heard of women who are possessed than men, and without doubt the explanation is that since Moslem women are such constant sufferers as a result of the license of Islam, there is much more occasion to consider them possessed by zeeraan. From the descriptions of various com-



plaints and the barbaric treatments given, it may quite safely be concluded that what, medically, would be diagnosed as delirium, or a paroxysm of pain, or stupor, or a faint, is here diagnosed as zeeraan.

Last winter a man died who was said to have zeeraan. According to the story of the family there was nothing at all the matter with him except the presence of zeeraan. But little by little it developed that two months previous to his final illness he had been hurt. Apparently he recovered from the first effects of the injuries he had received and so, in their minds, that accident had no connection with his later illness. When, during the last attack, his wife was urged to send for the doctor, her reply was, "This is something which a doctor can not cure, it is no sickness, just zeeraan, and there is no medicine for that, otherwise we would have cauterized him." The last day that the man lived the family apparently became frightened enough to cauterize him in spite of the zeeraan. He died about two hours later in great distress. The rule is that cauterizing is not resorted to until it is established that there are no zeeraan. A woman who was ill for some time with a bad leg was advised by helpful neighbors and friends to try the treatment for zeeraan, but she and her family persistently refused to accept that theory and so the leg was cauterized. She got well eventually and so disproved the statement of her friends.

Other outward manifestations that give rise to the belief that zeeraan are present are, moroseness which causes long spells of silence, hysteria, anger, excess of foolish talk and jesting and other abnormal actions. Not all people will have dealings with zeeraan or with those that are possessed with them, but the reasons for this vary greatly. One woman had been ill for seven years. She is very hysterical and very obstinate. Her suffering was very intense at times, and, in her hysteria, she abandoned all self control so that her people were often very perplexed how to take care of her. They decided that she had zeeraan but she herself refused to have them and has refused so obstinately ever since that she has won out and no one now says that she has them.

With some people it is fear of financial loss that causes them to refuse to have zeeraan, either for themselves or for any member of their family. The woman with the sore leg said: "No, the zeeraan never come to our family, we never have had them and never want them"; or another, "No, no, thank God, we have not got them in our family." Sometimes a man will divorce his wife because she has zeeraan, or if he learns that the girl or woman he was going to marry has them he will break his marriage agreement. And the reason in all these instances is a financial one. People possessed by zeeraan must give feasts at various times, and the women are prompted by their zeeraan to demand from their husbands new clothing, new jewelry, and new house furnishings, and if these are not forthcoming the zeeraan threaten that severe calamities will overtake them. So unless the husband is prepared to assume such burdens he very promptly rids himself of the cause, and families refuse to entertain the very idea of zeeraan because of the constant drain upon their time and strength and money.



There is still another class of people who refuse to have any dealings with zeeraan and zeeraanists, because they consider the whole system a disgrace and foolishness. One Arab bought a slave woman but very soon after the woman made some demand to appease her zeeraan. He at once resold her, refusing to have such a woman about, fearing that the other slaves would learn from her. A very prominent Moslem family in town have always refused to have any dealings with zeeraan and have strict orders in their household that no one must have them or associate with those that do. The order is, "Watch out, don't you dare to have zeeraan or go to those who do." As a general rule those who become possessed are young girls who are too inexperienced to contradict the statement of their elders, those who are excessively superstitious, those who desire and seek notoriety and excitement, those who are easily influenced and duped, and those who are simple and unbalanced. The presence of zeeraan seldom denotes great strength of character and independence of thought except in the leaders, and in them it is often a means to an end.

At first one is possessed by only a single zaar or a very few of them, but as these increase the possessor becomes an "um" or "abu." When some one is supposed to have zeeraan the "um" or "abu" is consulted and this oracle gives directions as to what must be done. Always there are feasts to be given by one who has a zaar or zeeraan, and to these feasts are invited, when for men, all those men who have zeeraan, and for a woman, all the women so possessed. Only those who belong to their society, or fraternity, are invited. When there is a feast word must be sent to all members, some of whom live in far distant villages. These must all be present, the penalty for non-appearance being to give a feast to all the zeeraan community. The negroes and the Arabs intermingle in these meetings but the Baharanes do not mingle with the others; the only outsiders they have with them are the negro musicians. Some members of the fraternity constitute the band and the instruments they play are the drum, tambourine and bagpipe. There are also a number of dancers. The members of this band are in the service of an "abu" or "um." Whenever there is a meeting of the zeeraanists the band plays during all the exercises which are carried out, the exception being the first time that a feast is given, by some one, to his zaar. The first "feast," as it is called, is of rice prepared with syrup. Besides this there is a tray full of all kinds of eatables such as peanuts, raisins, cakes, sweets of various kinds, melons, dates and fruits in season, nuts and so forth, the greater the variety the more acceptable the presentation. There must be at least about ten side dishes. Then there must be one dish into which is put the money for the "abu" or "um." The amount varies according to the wealth of the one who is giving the feast. For a first time the amount may be as high as twenty rupees or as little as six. This amount is increased considerably with each successive feast, and in addition those that play in the band and the dancers must also be paid.

When there is a meeting of a zeeraan association they gather in one large room in which incense is freely burned and which is consequently full of smoke. The person who is being visited by his zaar

and who is giving the feast at the zaar's command, is covered with a large cloth, and under this cloth are placed three incense burners filled with hot coals and incense, and until this incense is burned out of all of them the covering is not removed. This method is supposed to give special evidence of the presence of the zaar. Almost suffocated, and choking in this smoke, it is small wonder that the possessed one does show very lively symptoms of distress, which are considered evidences of the zaar's presence! After this expected and satisfactory evidence



MUSICIANS AND DANCERS

that the zaar is present the rice and the tray with food are brought in and he is asked whether he is satisfied, if all has been properly prepared, if there is any lack, and so on. Then the zaar will complain and say, "This is very little honor you are showing me; I expected a 'dhebeeh,' and all you have prepared for me is plain rice," "Dhebeeh" means roast mutton with rice and accompanying side dishes, such as gravies and stews. The answer to the zaar's peevish complaint is something like this, "O zaar, we have done all we could just now, we have no more money this year. You must have a little patience with us!" "Well, I will be patient, but when then will you give me a bigger feast?" "Next year," or "Two years from now," or "If the next diving season is a successful one," are the replies. Also at this time the zaar makes his request for new clothes, new jewelry, or new house furnishings.

The second feast that is given to one's zaar is like the first with the musicians as an additional attraction. While the band tom-toms, the rest of the visiting zeeraanists and the "um" get down on their knees and crawl towards the one possessed, making grunting noises as they do so. This is kept up for a long time until all are under the influence of the zeeraan and get communication from them.

The great feast ordered by the zeeraan is called "kabsh," meaning ram, and is so called because a sacrifice must be offered and this sacrifice is always a ram. The tray with all the side dishes is about the same as in the previous feasts, but the fee for the "abu" or "um" is very substantially increased. In pre-war days the fee was sometimes as much as five hundred rupees. The room for a "kabsh" is always a very large room. The meeting begins in the evening with a general dinner, but which is as a rule not an elaborate one. After the dinner the leader begins to chant, "La illaha illa allah wa Mohammed rasoul allah," all the others joining in chorus, and this exercise is kept up for about an hour, and all the while their bodies are swaying back and forth in rhythm to the chant. After this is ended the whole company get down on their knees and go through the crawling, grunting exercise which is kept up until they are exhausted. After a little rest the musicians begin their playing and do not stop until the next feature in the program, which is riding the ram by the party who is visited by the zaar. Sometimes this is done at midnight if, as they say, the zaar is not a very proud one, but if he considers himself very important this exercise takes place at dawn. The ram to be ridden is decorated with "mashmoum" and the rider is the one in whom the zaar is. The rider goes around the circle three or four times. This is seldom accomplished except with great cruelty to the poor beast, which is pulled and prodded in a most unmerciful way, and it is a mercy that it is killed later for it is usually injured in this exercise.

After this first riding the company all take some rest until an hour or two after daybreak when the second riding takes place, in the same way as the first. Immediately after this the ram is killed. This is done by the "abu" or "um" as the case may be, assisted by the zaar, as the possessed one is called, and a third party. The head of the ram is held over a large tray or dish, for not a drop of blood must be spilled or wasted. When the beast is killed, a glass is filled with the blood and into it is put some saffron and some sugar and the zaar drinks while the blood is warm. Three or four others of the company then strip the zaar and give him the "blood bath." The zaar is then dressed and put to sleep for an hour and after that is bathed to remove the blood and dressed in new clothes and new ornaments or decorations. In the meantime the sacrifice has been preparing. As with the blood so with the body; not a hair or bone or any of the entrails must be spilled or thrown away. The entrails and feet are boiled separately, but the skin, turned inside out and tied, is cooked with the rest of the body including the head. When all is cooked, a portion is brought to each table (the table is a large mat spread on the floor), and all the rest of the food is placed around the central dish. A stick, which has been bathed in the blood of the animal, is placed before the zaar. When all is in readiness, the leader asks the zaar,

"Is everything here that you want? Are all the bones here of your sacrifice? Tell us now if there is anything amiss and don't say later that this or that was not done right and that therefore you will take revenge on us by bringing upon us some accident." The zaar is commanded to answer and if he does not he is beaten with the bloody stick until he does. Usually the answer is that all is well but promises are exacted that in the future a similar feast shall be made in his honor.

Generally zeeraan content themselves with ordering feasts and other material pleasures, but occasionally they show a more cruel and capricious nature. A Bedouin woman in the hospital who was nursing a sick daughter suddenly departed very early one morning. When the daughter was questioned about the matter she said that the zeeraan had come to her mother during the night and told her that unless she left the hospital at daybreak to go to Refaa' (about eight miles away), they would slaughter her. The woman left at once. Another very sick woman in the hospital was removed, very suddenly, by her relatives, in spite of all the entreaties of the hospital workers. The relatives said that the girl had zeeraan and no doubt this sudden action was at their direction. Later it was learned that the girl died before she reached her home.

There does not seem to be the least desire or effort on the part of those possessed to be freed from their zeeraan. This, perhaps, is due to the fact that it provides them with a great deal of fun and excitement, and gives them distinction and authority which otherwise they would not have. One very good explanation in reference to all these beliefs and practices comes from a woman who is an inquirer. She said, "If a person wants to believe in these things and opens the heart and mind to them their influence and control is sure to follow, just as when one hears about Christ and opens the heart to His power, evil must go out." It is another way of saying, "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." The subject of zeeraan occupies a large part in the lives of the people and it is only the Gospel of Christ that can cast out these demons.





# Missionary Personalia



**Rev. S. M. Zwemer, D.D.**, has been kept very busy this fall in fulfilling engagements made through the Laymen's Missionary Movement, in whose especial interest he is spending this winter in America. On October 15th he addressed a meeting in New York, under the auspices of the Reformed Church Union, arranged for the purpose of introducing the Reformed Church Progress Campaign which is the program before our Denomination for the next five years.

**Rev. and Mrs. F. J. Barny** left New York on November 14th on their return to Arabia. It is expected that they will remain for some months, possibly a year, in India in order to make available to that Mission his own intimate acquaintance with Asiatic missionary problems and conditions akin to those in India. This will enable the Arabian Mission to assist the Arcot Mission at a time of the latter's very serious need on account of its many depletions in recent years, and especially during the present year. It is anticipated, also, that pending the settlement of conditions in Mesopotamia growing out of the change of Government, some months may elapse before the Arabian Mission will be able to carry forward its plans for the extension of its educational and evangelistic work in that area.

**Rev. E. E. Calverley** has been invited by the Indian National Council of the Young Men's Christian Association to enter upon war work under its auspices among the British and Indian troops in Mesopotamia. It is probable that a considerable contingent will remain in that area during the slow process of readjustment and settlement.

**Mrs. Sharon J. Thoms** sailed from Seattle November 21st with Rev. and Mrs. F. J. Barny to resume her missionary work in Arabia after the lapse of a number of years following upon the death of her husband, Dr. Thoms of Maskat, in 1913.

**Miss Sarah L. Hosmon** and **Miss Gertrud Schafheitlin**, having arrived in America on furlough, may now be reached at the following addresses: Miss Hosmon at 635 Wrightwood Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, and Miss Schafheitlin at Canning, Nova Scotia.



Princeton Theological Seminary Library



1 1012 01465 2111

**FOR USE IN LIBRARY ONLY**  
**PERIODICALS**

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



